

Southwell settles into his groove, shows vast improvement over last season

Nicolas Wahl
staff writer

No player has been more affected by K-State head coach Bruce Weber's decision to go with a smaller, four-guard lineup heading into conference play than Shane Southwell.

The junior forward has since been one of the main catalysts to any success that the Wildcats have seen, emerging as a budding star in Weber's motion offense predicated on hitting open jumpers and making the correct decisions whether coming off screens, setting them or finding the open man for a shot within the framework of the system.

Southwell's minutes have nearly doubled since returning from a foot injury that kept him out of USC Upstate and George Washington games back in December. His numbers in Big 12 Conference games have shown a marked improvement and consistency that were rarely present as he languished on the Wildcat bench a year ago.

Southwell is averaging 11.8 points per game in conference play this season, up 9 points from his average in 2011-12, but the improvement that the 6-foot-6 junior has made since last year is shown in his efficiency.

Southwell has been a huge threat, often matching up against larger players as a power forward, drawing op-



Emily DeShazer | Collegian
Junior forward Shane Southwell sizes up KU's senior forward Kevin Young on during the Jan. 22 conference matchup. Southwell finished the game with 19 points on 7-of-16 from the field.

posing bigs away from the paint and knocking down shots with regularity. Compared to last season, Southwell's field goal percentage has improved from 37.3 percent to

50 percent. His growth from beyond the arc is even more alarming. He shot just 14.3 percent from the 3-point line in conference play last season, compared to 48 percent this year.

He was huge in a 65-64 road win over West Virginia, scoring 17 points on 71-percent shooting, including 2-of-3 on 3-pointers, while sealing the victory with a huge block as time expired. He roared at the WVU student section after the clock had run out.

Never was Southwell's skill more evident than in K-State's 59-55 loss to Kansas last Tuesday. Left open all game, Southwell was lethal. He went 5-of-11 from 3-point range, totaling 19 points and seven rebounds in 32 minutes of play. At one point, he verbally let KU forward Kevin Young know that he better start guarding him a little closer. Kansas head coach Bill Self offered words of praise afterward.

"I think he would have to get my vote for the most improved player in our league," Self said.

Last year, if you remember, we played triangle-and-two and the guy we didn't guard was Shane, and he didn't even look at the basket."

He's definitely looking at the basket this year. That isn't to say that other areas of his game are lacking. His rebounding has tripled to five boards per game in conference over last year. His assist-to-turnover ratio has improved to a re-

spectable 2-to-1. His offensive rating, which is an advanced metric that measures a player's offensive worth by dividing their points produced by the number of possessions they play, has jumped from 95.5 to 125.1. These numbers are good enough for third in the Big 12 so far.

Still, Southwell knows that even with the improvement he has shown, the added minutes mean he will have to continue to get better, especially at banging with larger players on the block defensively and also while crashing the boards. He said he was unhappy with his performance in the Wildcats' 73-67 loss at Iowa State, their second in as many games.

"I have to get more rebounds. I had four rebounds, my man had 10," Southwell said, referring to Cyclone star Will Clyburn. "There's no excuse for that."

Southwell spent much of his time on the court trying to keep the Iowa State senior in check. Clyburn torched K-State for 24 points to go along with his 10 rebounds.

Southwell is ready to put the recent losses behind him, however, and he's confident his team will regain the effectiveness it showed in its previous eight-straight wins as they look forward to Wednesday's matchup with struggling Texas.

"We've just got come back and practice hard," Southwell said. "We'll be fine. We're going to compete at a high level."

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Senior guard Rodney McGruder drives past KU's Travis Releford in the Wildcats' 59-55 loss to the Jayhawks on Jan. 22 at Bramlage Coliseum. McGruder leads the team with 15.3 points per game.

Despite Longhorns' losses, Texas still poses a threat

Mark Kern
sports editor

When fans hear about Texas athletics, they usually think of Mack Brown and the Longhorns football program. However, men's basketball head coach Rick Barnes has turned Texas' basketball program into one of the most consistent of all of college basketball, tied for the fourth-longest streak of NCAA tournament berths in the country with 14 seasons. This streak is in major jeopardy, though, and a win against K-State could help turn their season around.

Entering tonight's game against K-State, the Longhorns have an overall record of 9-10 and have lost five of their six Big 12 Conference games.

One of the biggest reasons for the Longhorns' struggles has been the loss of Myck Kabongo, who is sitting out the first 23 games due to an NCAA suspension.

Despite their losses, the Longhorns have lost several games by the narrowest of margins, losing two conference games in overtime and putting

the No. 2 Kansas Jayhawks on the ropes before falling in the end.

Kabongo's suspension has forced freshman point guard Javan Felix to play way more than anyone on the team had expected.

On the season, Felix is averaging 8.4 points and just under six assists per game. His ability to step into the starting point guard spot has helped the Longhorns remain in games.

Teammate Sheldon McClellan, a sophomore guard, has also shown the potential to become a breakout star in the Big 12.

McClellan leads the team with 14.8 points and 4.2 rebounds, giving Texas a true scorer who can put up an electrifying performance. McClellan has the offensive ability to score in any way on the court. His ability to put the ball on the floor, as well as to hit the outside shot, makes him one of the most complete scorers in all of the Big 12.

Where the Longhorns have been struggling is in the front court. Led by two freshmen, Cameron Ridley and Ioannis

Papapetrou, Texas has shown extreme inconsistency when it comes to the post players' performance. Both of these players are young and both have shown that they are capable of becoming very solid players for the program in the future, but right now they just do not have the experience.

Any team that had to endure what the Longhorns had to during the offseason would have to make some major adjustments. Losing Kabongo, an All-Big 12 player and the guy that the Longhorns were counting on to truly carry the team, has forced players into roles that they are not accustomed to be in.

Despite these early struggles, this Longhorns team has shown up and competed in every single game that they have played in except for the matchup at Iowa State.

They really get after it on the defensive end and attack the glass extremely hard, so the Wildcats will need to play a physical game of their own against a team desperate for a marquee victory and to right the ship on their sinking season.



Emily DeShazer | Collegian

Sophomore guard **Angel Rodriguez** pressures senior guard **Elijah Johnson** of Kansas on Jan. 22 in Bramlage Coliseum. Rodriguez is second on the team, averaging 9.4 points per game this season.

By the numbers

John Zetmeir
staff writer

0 The number of road wins that the Texas Longhorns have accumulated this season.

Yes, Texas has had some tough road tests, playing at Iowa State, Baylor and Michigan State, but when you bring in the caliber of recruits that Texas has, they should be able to steal a road game here and there.

5 The number of offensive rebounds that K-State grabbed against Iowa State.

The Wildcats are averaging nearly 15 offensive rebounds per game. Don't let records deceive you; four of the Longhorns' five conference losses have been decided by single digits. This game could come down to who wins the

battle of the boards.

10 The number of home wins that the K-State Wildcats have so far this season.

This is also the total number of losses that the Longhorns have accumulated this season. K-State only has one home loss on the season while Texas only has one Big 12 Conference win.

15 A significant number for Bruce Weber.

Last season at Illinois, Weber's team reached a record of 15-4 — which is also K-State's current record. Unfortunately, Illinois finished that season with a record of 17-15. To avoid the same fate, K-State should hope

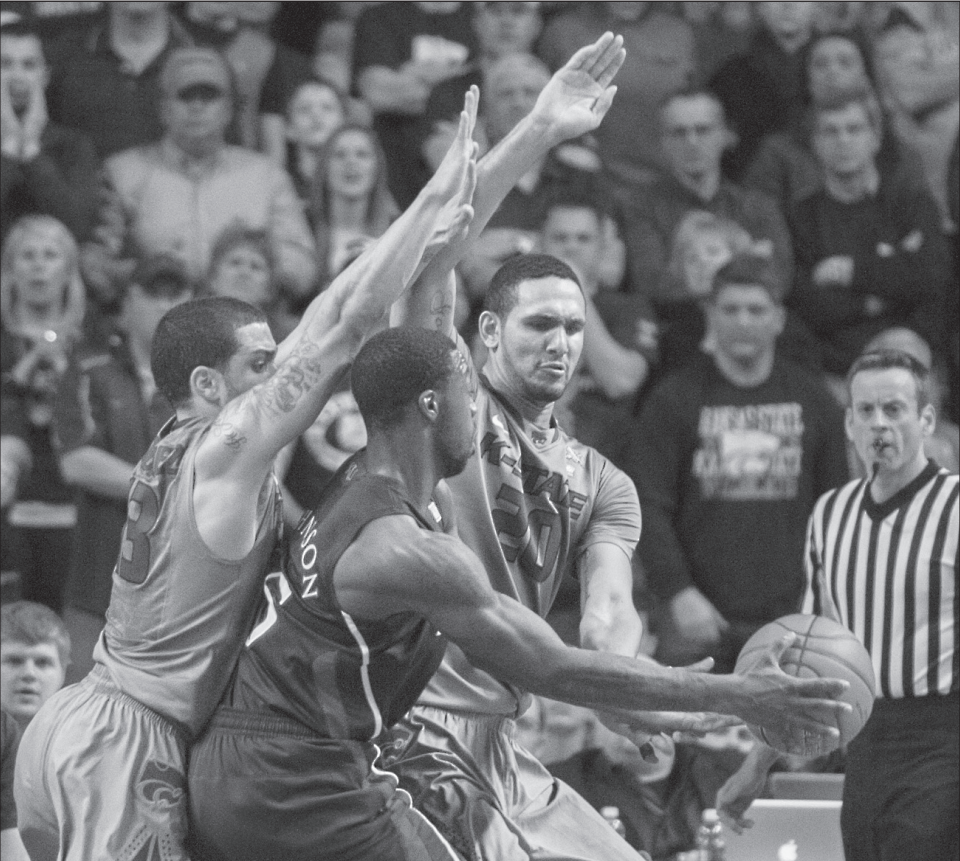
to avoid a home loss to Texas.

33 The number of points that senior Rodney McGruder scored the last time the Longhorns made a visit to Bramlage Coliseum.

McGruder is averaging 18.6 points in Big 12 play so far this season.

80 Junior guard Will Spradling's 3-point shooting percentage against Iowa State.

Four out of five of Spradling's shots from outside dropped, including one that went for a 4-point play. When he is hot, Spradling can be one of the best sharpshooters in the conference.



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Sophomore guard **Angel Rodriguez** and sophomore forward **Adrian Diaz** trap KU's **Elijah Johnson**. The Wildcats fell to the Jayhawks 59-55 on Jan. 22 in Bramlage Coliseum.

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Wildcats must limit second-chance opportunities

Adam Suderman
staff writer

In terms of shooting, the K-State men's basketball team did not have much difficulty playing with Iowa State on Saturday. Take a look at the game tape and the rebounds on the stat sheet and the Cyclones' 11 offensive rebounds will stand out.

Head coach Bruce Weber said one-on-one matchups and K-State's inability to box out show a deficiency in the Wildcat defense.

"It's a one-on-one thing for the most part. We all have to rebound and you can't say one guy," Weber said. "You can go through it and we watched the tape. Rod [McGruder] got beat one-on-one, Nino [Williams] got beat one-on-one, Shane [Southwell] got beat one-on-one, Will [Spradling] got beat one-on-one, D.J. [Johnson] got beat and everybody did. It's a determination thing and it's in pride. You're going to get beat sometimes, but there's just too many."

Weber notes that K-State's energy just two games ago against Oklahoma and, more recently, against Kansas show what the Wildcats are capable

"Texas is a good team. They took it down to the wire against KU and we're not taking them lightly at all, and we're going to come in ready to play. They're not doing too well, either, so I bet they'll come in ready to play too."

Will Spradling
junior guard

of when playing at a high level. "We were fine against Oklahoma a week ago," Weber said. "We were really flying high and playing good. Even against Kansas we played good defense. They just out-toughed us and we out-scraped us for some loose balls that probably made a difference."

With Texas coming into town Wednesday, K-State will be tasked to contain a team that is tied for second in the Big 12 Conference with Baylor in total rebounding. Texas' 9-10 record overall might lead fans to assume the team is struggling in multiple areas. Throw in a 1-5 conference record, and the prospect appears to be very grim for Texas, but Weber is careful not to underestimate the Longhorns.

"They've got to be one of the best 1-5 teams in the country," Weber said. "They've played everybody very close and they played a tough schedule."

Texas' losses to NCAA Division-II Chaminade University and also an under-manned USC team stand out, but competitive games against other very strong programs show that Texas is capable of competing at a high level.

"They went to Michigan State and played them down to the wire and Michigan State's in the top 20," Weber said. "They played UCLA and led most of the way and just took it to [North] Carolina. They had Kansas for 30-some minutes and West Virginia. They're a good team. They've got some physicality and a couple good scorers."

The Longhorns have been without guard Myck Kabongo, arguably their best player and scorer, due to NCAA eligibility issues, but Weber said they've moved past his absence after a



Emily DeShazer | Collegian

Sophomore forward **Thomas Gipson** goes up for a shot against the out-stretched arms of Kansas center **Jeff Withey**. Gipson leads the Wildcats with 5.5 rebounds per game this season.

few early season struggles.

"I think early they probably had a hangover, probably had a little depression figuring out when he's coming back and all that," Weber said. "Once they announced it, from me as a neutral person on the outside watching, it seemed like they got a little better grip of not having him and they moved forward and played much better basketball."

Junior guard Will Spradling says that K-State will need to be ready to go to face the Longhorns.

"Texas is a good team," Spradling said. "They took it down to the wire against KU and we're not taking them lightly at all, and we're going to come in ready to play. They're not doing too well, either, so I bet they'll come in ready to play too."

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